



A Journey
to the
**Deaf
World**
(...SILENT WORLD)

BY FUNMI OGUNRO

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(...SILENT WORLD)



BN 2523590

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DEDICATION

To God Almighty, the one in whom I live and move and have my being. I appreciate Him for making me a solution to the world. He alone gave me the inspiration to make many people become ‘Friends of the Deaf’ (FDF), in Loving memory of my late younger sister, Shenkoya Olushola Abidemi (Shollyz). I also dedicate this book to everyone who will end up becoming “Friends of the Deaf” as a result of reading it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I sincerely appreciate Dcns. Adedoyin Beyioku - Alase, President of DWAN (Deaf Women Association of Nigeria) for her constant support on FDF and for allowing me to use her story in this book. You are such an inspiration Ma.

I also appreciate all my special friends whose stories were included In this book, Comrade Daniel Adejuyigbe, Salako Abayomi, Queen Janet, Queen Nwafor and BMD. I love you guys so much, you really are my special friends.

There is a friends closer than a brother. You all have filled the vacuum I had when I lost my little sister. God bless y’all real good.

I also appreciate my graphics designer and printer Segun and Haywhy. You guys were never tired of my troubles.

Above all, a big thank you to my hearthrob, Ogunro Clement. You understood me perfectly and gave me the encouragement and all I needed to finish this project. I appreciate your love.

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GROWING UP WITH A SPECIAL SISTER

Who could have thought it possible? Such a pretty baby! She looks so perfect!!!

“How do you even know she is deaf? You must be a witch!!!

These and many more insults was rained on my precious mother, Mrs Mary Kehinde Shenkoya, who carried her little baby of 5 months to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) for proper examination by the doctors.

She had earlier noticed that her new baby was so peaceful and sleeps so soundly, even when the noise of the pepper grinding machine was much. Everyone says “She’s just being a peaceful girl”. “What a quiet and lovely baby”. But my very sensitive mother sensed that something was not right. “After all, this is not my first or second baby”she explained. We call her the ‘SAN’ (Senior Abiyamo of Nigeria)

So one day, she decided to have a test on her little baby. She set her little baby close to the door and made her see her exit the living room. She immediately entered in again through the second room and came to the back of the set down baby who was expecting her to come in through the front door.

She called her name Shola! Shola!! Shola!!! But she would not turn towards the direction of her mummy. Well, mummy felt, because she was a baby, she might not know her name yet. So she carried the prayer bell we use for morning devotion, to get her baby to turn to her, but No! Alas, she was born Deaf. My mother carried her precious baby, wept profusely and rushed to the hospital, but who would believe her story?

The doctor ran some tests on the baby, but was finally diagnosed as born deaf. So the journey began. From mountains of prayers to valleys of vigils upon vigils. My parents did all they could to get my little sister a Miracle. Cars were sold, golden jewelries, expensive clothings and many valuable things in the house were sold, just to get Shola the desired MIRACLE. Many places of worship were visited.

After 7 years, Olushola Abidemi Shenkoya was registered in a Special school at Ijebu-Ode, behind our lady school of Apostle, Ogun State, and she began to live with my grandma, who pampered and took great care of her. Everyone pitied her for her disability and so, she gets instant gratification for anything she wanted. She became “Orisa Akunlebo” (Small god to be worshiped), because she was Deaf and I would wish myself Deaf too! She was never reprimanded for any act of wrong, because she would cry a whole day if beaten and people would pity her and say “Why are you people maltreating this young girl? Is it because she is Deaf?”

Nobody told us in the family that we were supposed to learn her language and communicate with her using the standard sign language. We use the crude method of signing to communicate with her and when the argument was hot, I would take pen and paper to write. So we exchanged our written communication frequently to argue with each other or pass a crucial message.

Whenever her friends came visiting, I would make them feel very welcomed, get them snacks, on the TV, give them remote control of the TV, bring out films for them to watch and

then, I would leave the living room for them to communicate freely and not shy with my presence.

I thought I was doing them a favor/good, but not knowing I was cheating myself on the opportunity of learning their language. Hmnmnm!!! How I regret that now!

After her demise, every Deaf person reminds me of her. I tried to help them communicate their needs to people around, but usually got limited by my inability to communicate with the Conventional Sign Language.

I want to be that voice, that encourage people to learn sign language.

The Sign language is the language used by the Deaf to communicate with each other. They also it to communicate with the hearing folks who understand their language.

If the Doctors and nurses had understood the sign Language, my late sister might not have died of just because of thyphoid.

SPECIAL INDEED (...*what made them Special?*)

The Deaf are special in so many ways. Let's consider some of the attributes of a Deaf person.

1. A Deaf person believes he is **better** than the hearing person, because he can do what the hearing cannot do. *He can talk with the hand and hear with the eyes.*
2. A Deaf person can be so *focused* and undistracted by noise coming from left & right, because he can't even hear it. The deaf enjoys the world's absolute silence, which the hearing pays so much to get. Particularly in Lagos, there are so much noise, but the deaf enjoys the serenity of deafness. The Deaf can stay focused on a particular project until it's finished, just like Thomas Edison.
3. *Emotional intelligence* is another great feature that makes them very special. A Deaf person understands the unspoken words of the person they are relating with. They hear with the eyes. You can call that "Sixth Sense".
4. *Higher sense of awareness* is also a

beautiful feature associated with deafness.

5. ***Exceptionality*** is also identified with my Deaf friends. Some Deafs are exceptionally talented. Whenever their area of talents are being discovered. Some of them are specially skillful with craftworks like shoes & bag making, drawing, bead making, lace weaving etc. Please, help them discover their talents and ensure they focus on it. It is not only in academics that they can excel.

6. Are you aware the ***Deaf enjoy sound sleep?*** They are not affected by surrounding noise.

My late sister told me she was far better than the hearing, because of this particular feature. She would say, whenever she sleeps, nobody could wake her up with noise, except she was ready to wake up by herself. Little wonder, she refused waking up at her death bed, despite all the noise of people crying and shouting her name.

Sleep on my beloved!!!

THE GREATEST BARRIER

Consider this scenario, Mr. King went into a conference hall for a programme that was advertised. He was hoping to listen to a nice presentation, which was part of the programme advertised. There was complete silence in the hall and everybody focused on the presenter, who refused to speak with his mouth, but used gestures, sign language and facial expression and everyone seems to understand, except Mr. King who was a hearing fellow. He became so furious, he could not get the message every others react to and the presentation remain unknown to him. But he had prepared to learn and benefit from this programme. He got so angry and he came out of the conference room in annoyance.

Well, maybe that was the way my late younger sister Olushola Abidemi Shenkoya felt, whenever we go to church and everyone enjoys the music and listen to the preacher delivering a powerful sermon.

Maybe that was why she stopped following us to church, but would rather travel several miles to Christ Church, Gbagada, Lagos. There she felt

so much at home and would understand every bit of the Sunday Service, because an interpreter would be there to bridge the communication barrier.

Many Deaf people in Nigeria, face a whole lot of difficulties everyday they go out. Trying to access quality education, relationship and with their placement on the labor market. The unemployment rate among people with disability is so high that many have become beggars on the street. Few employers are willing to employ the Deaf. There are not enough interpreters in the country. Many hearing folks do not see the need to learn sign language, so long as their relative are not deaf. Many people with deaf relations do not know that they were supposed to learn sign language, to be able to communicate freely with the Deaf family members.

Many close relatives of Deaf people learn the crude means of communicating with their Deaf family members, but do not care about learning the standard sign language to be able to communicate with any other deaf person they come in contact with. As a result of their inability to communicate freely, many Deaf people are misunderstood, isolated and remain trapped in the same society that breeds them.

Communication is the greatest challenge facing the Deaf people. It is become very essential for everyone to learn sign language and be able to relate with the Deaf people.

Many die at the Hospital, because no one was there to explain to the doctors or nurses how exactly the patient feels. There is a need for an Interpreter to be employed in every public places.

If a Deaf holds the stomach and complains to the doctors, they assume it is stomach ache. Meanwhile, it could be ulcer, jaundice, menstrual pain or so many other medical problems that relates to the stomach.

It is essential that every everyone in the society learn these beautiful sign language and be able to help bridge the communication gap between the deaf and hearing communities.

MY SPECIAL FRIENDS

In this chapter, I'll like to introduce to you some of my deaf friends. Many of them were speaking and hearing before they became deaf and these people have refused to be limited by what life throws at them, but have rather chosen to make the world see what they can do and not what they cannot do.

They are post lingual (because they have acquires a language before becoming Deaf).

They really are great inspirations to me and I believe your world can be inspired by their stories too.

They love to call their “Disabilities” as “These abilities”. Do not focus on what hey cannot do (Hearing), but consider their “These Abilities”. So enjoy reading!

FOUNDER AND NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF DEAF WOMEN ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (DWAN) STORY

I am Deaconess Adedoyin Beyioku-Alase. Founder and National President of Deaf Women Association of Nigeria (DWAN). Also Chairperson of Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) Lagos chapter. Also, the National Women Leader of APC's People with Disability (PWD), among other leadership positions in Disability community and outside it. I'm 63 year old. At almost 20 years of age, I became deaf. It happened that I became ill on September 5, 1974. I went to private hospital when I was feeling feverish and unable to eat. I was given an injection, immediately felt dizzy and about to fall. I was given milk and other drugs. From that day i started having noise in my ears thinking it was from my brain. Hmmm, It was not easy. I used to hide myself because I was ashamed of being Deaf. I couldn't hear people calling me. For many years 1974 to 1985, I was alone in my own world I went to Kano in 1981 to join my late husband

who was hearing(May his soul rest in peace)
I gave birth to my first child, a son, who fortunately for me, became Deaf at 3 years old by name Ayoade. He became Deaf through measles. Before he became deaf, he was my ears, but God picked him to join me in the Deaf world. May His name be praised. I am the first Deaf in my family for 3rd generations. My son's deafness made me accept mine and to focus on him, because I wanted to die, but because of him, I decided to live.

In 1974 that my deafness started, I had my school Certificate and worked as a Receptionist telephonist. I didn't know any Deaf, because I stayed at Kano from 1981-1994 I read in Punch newspapers about Organization of Deaf Business men and women. So, I joined them because I was curious to know what type of business a Deaf person can do? I had thought, once deaf, the person is useless.

Please note that I didn't attend any Deaf school, but my son, Ayo went to Federal College of Education, Special (FCE), OYO, where he learnt sign language and taught me afterwards. Mrs. Bose Dahunsi was the first person to teach me ASL Alphabets. We were together in Deaf

world. Bose introduced me to Apostolic Faith church, where I worshipped and learnt more signs.

I married the love of my life, a hearing man, but I know my limits.

I know that I am DEAF.

I am a Disability advocate, very passionate about Deaf Women and children. People know that I live my life for the Deaf because it is my Ministry.

Irrespective of educational status, religious, age, tribe etc. I have “a can do spirit”.

. I am also a motivational speaker. Nobody can stop me except myself.

DWAN (Deaf Women Association of Nigerian) is a child of necessity. A gap to be filled!

I traveled to Jos as a delegate of ODBM&WIN (Organization of Deaf Business Men & Women in Nigeria) to Leadership Conference organized by Gallaudet University There was no woman talking, but only men after men. So a Nigerian emigrant from the group, Prof. Emilia Chukwuma asked women to talk. I took it up

without sign language so she asked me to organize Deaf women in Nigeria, because there was none. This I have done and moved on when no one thought it was possible.

I thank God because, what started small in Lagos with 33 members has turned to a big tree with many branches. DWAN is heard of Nationally and internationally. It is a voice to reckon with in Disability community. It is an independent organization.

I am a member of LASODA (Lagos State Office of the Disabled). Im one of the Board of Trustees, representing Deaf cluster

I am the Vice Chairman of DPAI, Lagos (Disability Policy Advocacy Initiative).

In 2016, I became the Accessibility Role Model of Sweden Embassy, Abuja, National Human Rights Commission, Abuja.

Deafness has not been able to limit me, to the Glory of God!

THE JOURNEY INTO DEAF WORLD BY A COMRADE.

Adejuyigbe Daniels Ayobami. Majority of people, even the Deaf, believe that God created us Deaf. However, i strongly disagree with this believe. If we look well into the book of Genesis 1:31, it says everything God created was **GOOD** (Prefect). So my belief is that, it was sin that brought sickness which gave birth to all kinds of disabilities.

I was born a normal child. I could hear and speak very well. At the age of four, the journey began.

On a beautiful morning as usual, my mum woke me up, had me bath and dressed up in my school uniform. As i wanted to start eating my breakfast (Bread and Tea), a strange terrible cold came on me. I was rushed to and admitted at University Teaching Hospital, Ibadan. I was very sick and was on the hospital bed for the period of one year and some months.

At that time, i turned five years old and started experiencing hearing loss. I couldn't hear normal again, but hearing sounds. I was later

discharged from the hospital and went back home. I stayed home for a long period and during this time, i was taken to different places in search of cure to no avail.

I went back to school, but couldn't do well in the class. It was then i was referred to Ibadan School For The Deaf, Ijokodo, Ibadan.

At age 11, i couldn't hear any sound again and my ears closed up completely. It was at that time i stumbled on a Bible and started reading like a normal text book until i saw Matthew 11:5 which says, on that day, the Deaf shall hear, blind will see and the lame will walk. I went to my dad and told him am no longer interested in searching for cure again and he agreed.

Growing up was so tough coupled with the fact that i couldn't hear. However, with Sign Language, communication was so sweet.

If there is a reason for me to thank God, it will be for sparing my life that i didn't die of my inability to hear.

I remember this particular morning, I was already late for school (Primary school) we were living at Oremeji street, opposite Premier Hotel, Mokola Ibadan. I would have to go through the normal route from Mokola to Sango

then to Ijokodo, through Oke-Itunu barracks. I was about getting to the railway, which leads to the back of the school when i saw some people standing and someone wave at me to stop, but i couldn't, because of the time and i started juggling and stepping on each railway Channels facing down. I suddenly raise my head up to see how far i have gone, only to behold what looks like a giant fence. Then it downed on me that I was standing in front of a train. I don't know what threw me off the Railway. I just found myself resting my back on a bush. Those passengers in the train were just raining abuses and throwing all kinds of objects at me.

I was just still until the long train was gone. Many people rushed down to see how damaged my body would have been, but were shocked to see me alive. Some were discussing in groups while some were just in awe of the Miracle. They were able to recognize as being Deaf through my uniform. By then it was too late to go to school so i went back home and ever since, i have developed the art of looking back, left, right and front especially on the main roads.

All thanks goes to God and Dr. Andrew Foster of

blessed memory who brought Sign Language all the way from America to Africa especially Nigeria.

I also want to thank my parents for the love they have for me. Despite the fact that they had other children, they did not abandon me, but rather, spent a great fortune of time and resources on me and ensured i went to school just like my siblings. I'm forever grateful to my parents.

Please Learn Sign Language and be my friend!

SALAKO ABAYOMI AHMED

I'm salako Abayomi Ahmed, I was born normal, I became Deaf at age seven, as a result of measles. I was a primary 2 pupil of Baruwa Primary school, Ijeshatedo, Surulere. I was able to speak very well and heard clearly.

I remembered being sick of malaria and I was taken to the hospital, given an injection and drip for the treatment, but I started having another infection in my body, which made me unable to stand up or walk. I was referred to University Teaching Hospital, Idi- Araba, Surulere. I spent almost two months at the hospital and I realised I had become deaf.

When we left hospital, I returned to my normal school (1989 to 1995), but it was not easy. Before I proceeded to St Boys Grammar school, Idi-araba, Mushin, Lagos, my father had been following-up regularly on me to know how I performed in the school.

A few months later, my father took me out of that school, and registered me at Wesley schools for the Deaf, 33 Ajao road, off Ogunlana Drive, Surulere, to start Primary 1, again. This was because I did not know the Sign language.

It was difficult for me to accept, but some of my family members advised my father to take me to Secondary School for the Deaf at state Grammar school (Special) Itolo Street, off Bode Thomas, Eric-Moore, Surulere, Lagos in 1996 to 2002. There I learnt the Sign Language.

Two year Later, I gained admission to Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo state to study Religion studies in 2004 to 2005.

In 2005, I changed my course to Business education (Accounting)/Special Education. From 2005 -2007.

In 2008, I wrote Post UTME at Unilorin three time in three years, I could not meet up with the cut off mark. In 2010, I applied for the Federal Teacher Scheme as a volunteer job for 2years, under SUBEB, Maryland, Lagos From 2010 to 2012.

Two years later, I applied for another volunteer job under Lagos State Eko Secondary school Project, for 6months, after that I applied part time course to read Educational management/political science 2013 -2017.

I gained admission to University of Ibadan, Oyo and after my degree, I went for a computer training program at University of Ibadan for a

year to obtain knowledge on computer Literature and Internet.

In 2013 I was able to secure a job under Ogun State Teaching Service Commission as a Special Teacher for the hearing impaired students at St Peter's Senior College, Olomore, Abeokuta, Ogun state, where I teach Economics and Commerce, From 2013 till date.

Church activities: I became born again in 1999, during my school fellowship and a few months later, I became a leader of school fellowship in my secondary school and teaching deep digging every Tuesday at RCCG Tree of Life, Marine road, Apapa, from 2007 to 2008. that was before I moved to before Christchurch, Gbagada. I finished school of disciples 2010 and have been serving God at the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG).

JOURNEY INTO WORLD OF SILENCE. (DEAFNESS) - Janet

I am Taibat Mohammed, Queen Janny as popularly called by Friends. I am Deaf.....Not just ordinary deaf, But with Capital Letter D- I am proud of being Who I am.

I grew up in a family of Seven. I'm the 6th child from the Family of Chief Saka Alatunse. Life was fun as a child until one fateful day where i find myself on a sick bed, my body was hotter than fire, i could not go to school, I was in primary 4 back then, promising, jovial, intelligent and a smart kid I was.

The sickness persisted day in and day out, draining my parent wealth, fortunes, everything. My mother a business woman ,have spent all she had, property sold. This was not enough, until they started borrowing. One fateful day I ask mum, what kind of rain it was that has been falling since. She said which rain? No rain o! She opened the curtain. Lo and behold, the sun was shinning brighter.

This changed the course of my life. I became

Deaf and all I could perceive down inside my ear was a loud noise, non stop, even till today. I still have the disturbing sound inside my head, but hmmmnn, I have learnt to overcome the noise. I appreciate my sweet mother, who still believe in me and sent me back to school.. I completed my primary and secondary school in a Hearing School. I passed through Hell! The mockery, the isolation, the rejection I bore them all. No friend for me again after I became Deaf, all my friends left me, Nobody wanted to associate with me again.

Well I find solace at Library, their was no book in my secondary school library that I have not read, from Yoruba to English to science, I read them all...unknown to me that school authority was taking notice of me. So one day on assembly, my name was called, someone tap me on my back, because I was carried away with thought far and near, since I couldn't hear what they were saying on the assembly. I was called out and I saw everyone clapping. I asked myself what going on? I was made Library Prefect!!!

A Deaf girl whom everyone shunned became the Library Boss! Wow! Everyone now want to be

my friend.

To those reading my story today, be positive.

Your Disability is not a barrier to greatness, you can attain any position you desire in life, all you need is to believe in yourself that YOU CAN .

The struggle continued after I finished my secondary school.

My parent had no means of furthering my education to higher institutions, due to the loss I caused through my Sickness. But Today, I own it all to my Mother, Anikemola. I finished my NCE in computer science at federal college of education Oyo special, I also graduated with a degree at University of Ilorin, where I studied Educational Technology.

Today I can stand tall with my head high...

Oh Yes I made It!!!

Am currently working with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) headquarter Abuja, Am also A Queen (Miss Philantropy Africa), Helping the less privileged children and adults by empowering them with skills, on how to make bags and Shoe, soap, perfumes and lots more.

We are like any other normal person, but the only thing that separate us is the ability to hear. We have a language, called the Sign Language. It is what we use to break communication barrier.

Be my friend, learn my language.

I am special because I do extraordinary things my hearing counter parts cannot. I am deaf, I do my things my way.

I use my hand to talk... my eyes to hear.

That is what makes me special.

QUEEN NWAFOR

I am Queendaline Onyinyechi Nwafor, from Ebonyi State, Nigeria. I am 27 years old. I was not born Deaf, but it was as a result of a sickness (*meningitis*) at the age of 4. All I can say or pen down about my life today is that GOD has been faithful, despite my condition. Though the life threatening sickness almost took my life, but thanks be to GOD who saved me.

In retrospect to my early childhood and reminiscing on the challenges I faced while growing up as a deaf, I had to accept the situation, love it, grow up with it and make the best out of it. A product of which I am a national diploma holder today in social work discipline and still aiming for more academic strides.

I'll like to encourage those out there who have hearing abilities to change their perspectives and attitudes of stigmatizing the Deaf. Yes we are normal people who have accepted ourselves for who we are and see deafness as a common challenge life comes with, of which everyone has his or her's.

I also wish to use this medium to draw the attention of humane individuals to assist in any capacity they can, any deaf they come across.

Yes a deaf can be trained in school!

Yes a deaf can be skillfully empowered!

Yes a deaf can be developed in self reliance and self actualization.

The government, religious leaders, NGO's and community leaders should also support the course of the deafs, by initiating and implementing reasonable policies meant to foster the rights and care for the us, promote learning of sign languages and setting up innovations in which the rights of deaf are protected, their effective functioning enhanced, and their self actualization achieved... Instead of ignoring us thereby leading us to the corners of the streets, filling stations, traffic junctions to beg, I mean we are and worth more than such lifestyle!!!

Finally, I want to encourage the deaf worldwide to grow out of self pity, depression, regret, low self esteem and other morally degrading

attitude and get attached to the fact that you are unique, peculiar, and remain the handmaid of GOD (Ps 139:14)..

I also call on those who are relatives of deaf children to support and train them just like every other children, they deserve it and are able to acquire knowledge of any kind.

Deafness is an advantage and never a disadvantage.

An ability in disability!

A capability in incapability!!

and a possibility in impossibility!!!

BRUME MOFE-DAMIJO DEAFNESS AND MY STORY

More than two decades ago, on a beautiful Sunday morning, I came to God's beautiful earth unable to hear and speak. But who would have known at the time? No newborn speaks on the first advent into the world. A week later, I was named "Oghene Brume" which means "God Gift Me", "God Favored Me".

Twenty years after my birth, I understood the significance of my name and have come to really love it. Honestly, I am a gift. God be praised forever!

My inabilities to hear and to speak have been the most devastating experiences of my parents. Mother had taken me to many places, including churches for healing my deafness but it didn't work for me. I had been taken to T.B Joshua of the Synagogue Church of Christ for what was termed "deliverance", he healed all people except me. During a healing session, the pastor had stood before me and seen me but had nothing to say or do. I was utterly flabbergasted

as he turned away to heal others. It puzzled me greatly. I walked away with our “houseboy” and wept bitterly. Brume, the Gifted Child in childhood- between 1- 4 years, my parents knew I had talents.

THE SNAKE BITE THAT DEFINED MY CHILDHOOD

At 5, a mysterious illness struck me hard. It was so hard and fierce I was too incapacitated to get to school to receive an education. I didn't go to school from the age of 3 until I was 9 years old as a consequence of the illness.

Needless to repeat that I had come into the world deaf and mute, many years before this incident, I had been bitten by a black snake which left my leg in enormous pain that would not relieve. We had been advised by a native doctor to cut off the fallen left leg after it had gotten pretty deteriorated. My loving grandmother of blessed memory declined and led me away from my mother who was utterly too shocked and distraught to handle the situation. I love my mom.

The Love of Mothers and the Search for Healing

Extremely weak and unable to stand and walk during this challenging event, grandmother, 78, healthy and beautiful, was determined to give me back my life. She was very concerned about the direction that I was taking as a child with so many talents and potentials. “How could the boy have come into the world unable to hear and speak, and then a few years after, lose an ability to move?” Granny always mused to herself. Grandmother had been a queen in her heydays, during the time of Nigerian Civil War and understood the values of inner strength, perseverance and fortitude in the face of the most enormous predicament. I loved her spirit. Granny took me around- to houses of God, and various prayer meetings, finding the cure for my bad leg. Gracious God, it couldn't be cured.

THE DECISION TO BECOME AN AMPUTEE.

More tired and perplexed than ever before, and on the verge of giving up on this leg, my mother would tell my grandma to have my left leg cut off. Grandma, while looking her straight in the eye, would blurt out “No!”.

Granny believed genuinely that something was up, that there was more to this snakebite thing. She decided to ask the native doctor about the

character of that particular snake that defied unravelling. A snake powder that was peculiar to the black snake that had bitten was handed to granny for my healing. She decided to ask the native doctor about the character of that particular snake that defied unravelling. A snake powder that was peculiar to the black snake that had bitten was handed to granny for my healing.

On administration of this substance on the fallen leg, I lost the appetites to eat and to sleep. The effects of the medicine disturbed me much. There was a lot of pain- so big you cannot begin to imagine my state. Fortunately, however, not long after, snake powder had healed me. I had become healed and healthy at the 8 years old.

Yet, I remained deaf and mute. There was nothing that could be done about these ones. We had believed this set of condition was from the Creator. We weren't fighting to hear and to speak anymore. We wanted to make sure I was healthy sufficient to resume a healthy life.

On his return from the United Kingdom, my father had the opportunity to take me home. I lived with him in Lagos for many years.

Formal education had just begun.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS, LEARNING DIFFICULTY AND HEALTH PROBLEMS

Convinced that a particular school for the disabled was the proper thing for me, my father enrolled me at a deaf school in Ibadan, Nigeria. With repeated occurrences of health problems, including nose bleeding, I lacked focus and coordination and had to repeat classes. Many times in an academic session, I would be away from school.

A few years later, I got enrolled at a separate school at MD SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF, Omole, Isheri Road, Ikeja, Lagos. A fabulous school, it held some of the most disciplined exceptional teachers that I have ever had.

I worked extremely hard and became a pretty good student. My life was pretty better.

I proceeded to a mainstream school. Ijokodo High School, Ijokodo, Ibadan, OYO state, and shortly after, to Methodist Grammar School, Bodija, Ibadan. Both of these mainstream schools included hearing and deaf students situated in different blocks in the same premises. After graduation, I went to Federal College of Education (SPECIAL), Oyo.

SPED, as it is commonly called, was and remains a school for all kinds of students, including

disabled and non-disabled from across various disability clusters, and high and low students regarding socio-economic status.

I finally travelled to University of Ilorin, Kwara State. For four good years, I had the opportunity to have an excellent, complete, higher education. There, I knew how things worked better than at any other time in the past. I had a chance to work briefly and at low capacity with the Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja before I flew to the United States of America where I am currently living with my wife and kids. Overall, looking back, I have had a reasonably wonderful life. Yet, my best days are yet to come. I have been fascinated by how people deal with significant personal disappointments, including the decisions they make for their lives in their pursuit of happiness.

I want to be a writer and a motivational speaker. But, in as much as I hope and envision for my life, I hope that my experience goes beyond my imagination.

Thank you.

Brume Mofe-Damijo

SIGN LANGUAGE HISTORY

It all started in the early 1800's when Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, who was a graduate of Yale University, became an FDF (Friend of the Deaf) with a young Deaf girl named Alice. Thomas Hopkins began to teach Alice few words and succeeded at it. So Dr. Mason Cogswell, Alice father encouraged this young graduate to become fully involved in the establishment of a special school for the Deaf in America.

15 years later, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet traveled to Europe in search of a good method of teaching the Deaf, but many of the programme directors were not willing to share their techniques with him. Thomas Hopkins was finally able to meet up with Abbe Sicard, the Director of Paris School for the Deaf, which was established in 1755. Abbe was said to be the Inventor of the French Sign Language.

After several months of studying at Paris, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet persuaded one of the Deaf instructor, Laurent Clerc to return with him to America. They established the first American School for the Deaf in Hartford Connecticut (1817), Meanwhile, the unconventional sign language was already being used.

Clerc and Gallaudet observed how the school grew rapidly and deaf students from all over the nation came together.

Clerc and Gallaudet noticed how these students, yet used another form of sign language outside the classroom walls, which was free of grammar limitations. This became the basis of forming the American Sign Language (ASL)

ASL is easy to learn, but lack sound English grammar. That is why, when a Deaf person write using the ASL, people complain of poor grammar in the written communication.

When Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet died, his youngest son, Edward Miner Gallaudet, continued his legacy in deaf education. Edward became a teacher and at the school and was able to ensure the legislators, inn 1864 permit the Columbia to the Deaf, issue college decrees to the Deaf students. That same year, the National Deaf-Mute College, at the Columbia institutes college division was set up, being the first college for the deaf.

In 1893, the college was renamed “Gallaudet College” to honor Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and in 1986, the college was renamed as “Gallaudet University”. As at today, the university is known as the only Deaf University all over the world, situated in Washington DC.

SIGN LANGUAGE VS ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Is sign language different from English Language? Why do we have different sign languages in different countries? Why should there be more than one sign language?

Doesn't that just complicate things?

These and many more were the questions I kept asking when I started learning the Sign language.

Now, here are seven points to note about signs language that might surprise you:

1. *Different countries have different sign languages.* Why is that?

The sign language, just like any spoken languages, developed naturally out of groups of people, interacting with each other in a certain country. It is usually affected by their common history and cultural factors.

Just as we have in different cultures, a language is written in addition to being spoken, while a dialect is just spoken.

In my own option, there is no such thing as a language, but rather dialects are all there is

it is believed that a language is basically a collection of dialects, where speakers of different dialects within the same language can all understand each other. But in actual sense, that is not true. I'm married to a Yoruba man from Ondo state (Oka-akoko precisely) but I'm from Ijebu, Ogun state. We both speak the Yoruba language, but when I first traveled with my husband to his village, I could not understand his people whenever they use their dialect, but it's still the same Yoruba language.

Even right there in Ondo state, many local dialects exist and some do not understand each other, yet they all speak Yoruba Language and from the same state. This is why I believe, that language does not exist; but rather Dialects!!!

The sign language differs from country to country. It is not a device or system invented and handed over to the Deaf community as an assistive device. But like every other language, sign language differs, from country to country.

2. ***Improvised gesture can evolve into a full language.*** As we have discussed in the history of ASL, deaf people of same community have been observed to accept the gestures they used at home to create a sort of pidgin sign among each other and generally, people regularize it. It worked for communication, but wasn't consistent. There is a great need for a conventional sign language that is universally accepted and embraced.

3. ***Sign language does not represent spoken language:*** ASL different from BSL (British Sign Language). Despite the fact that English is the spoken language of both countries. There is a lot of contact between sign language and spoken languages, because deaf people read and write or lip read in the surrounding language (Sign language reflects this). English can be represented through finger spelling, or artificial system like signed Exact English or Cued speech. (These are codes for spoken and written language) These are not language themselves.

4. ***Sign language have their own grammar.*** There are rules for well structured sentences in sign language.

There are rules for well-formed sentences in sign language. For example sign language uses the space in front of the signer to show who did what to whom by pointing. Also, another rule is that a well-formed question must have the right kind of eyebrow position. If you use the rules wrongly, or inconsistently, you will have a foreign accents.

5. *Children acquire sign language in the same way they acquire spoken language.*

The stages of sign language acquisition are the same as any spoken language. When one start producing words you substitute easier hand shapes for more difficult ones. Sentences are made by stringing signs together and you later get control of all the grammatical rules.

Learning becomes easy through interaction with people around. It becomes easy by consistently communicating with deaf people around. Be it sign language or any other language, you need to surround yourself with the native speakers.

There is a great need for the hearing to have a deaf friend closeby to learn sign language.

6. *Brain damage affects sign language in the same way it affects spoken language.* When a fluent signer has a stroke, or brain injury, they may lose the ability to sign correctly again. They may be able to sign, but not put them in the correct grammatical configurations. Neurologically, making gestures is quite different from using sign language.

7. *Sign language is a visual language.* Sign language is just like spoken language in many ways, but it's very unique. It takes full advantage of its visual nature for expressive or artistic effect. It can also be formal or very straight forward. Facial expressions, clauses, pauses, breathe intake, intonation and melody, the stressing or the emphasizing of sounds. The body posture and finally, head and hand gestures, all play important roles in communicating with sign language.

A CLARION CALL

Friends of the Deaf Foundation (FDF) is an NGO set up by divine inspiration in loving memory of my late younger sister Shenkoya Olushola Abidemi (Shollyz) of blessed memory. Whenever I meet a deaf person particularly on my way out, I always try my best to help them communicate with people around what they actually needed. But because I'm not very good with conventional sign language, I'm mostly limited in helping out.

I remembered vividly how my sister failed the first time at the University of Ilorin the first year. She told me then, that there were few interpreters in her faculty and most times, lecture is on-going in her class, the interpreter might be in another department. And that was why she failed.

The cost of having an interpreter as an individual student is on the high side. That got me thinking; What if sign language learning resources become readily available for all to access? What if sign language be made a compulsory subject in hearing schools?

What if interpreters be employed by government to help serve the deaf in every

public places like churches, mosque, banks, markets and so on.

So, FDF hopes to bridge the communication barrier by making many people embrace the Sign language. We have a WhatsApp platform, where we learn sign language using pictorial and video tutorial method. You can chat the Admin on 08032223015 to be added to the group.

We want to make the learning of sign language easily accessible by everyone.

The deaf community comprises of deaf and hard of hearing individuals who share common language, common experiences and values, and most importantly, a common way of interacting with each other.

I believe very strongly, “...With sign Language....We are equal”.

FAMOUS DEAF PEOPLE HELEN KELLER (1880-1968)

Helen Adam Keller was a famous advocate and writer of twelve inspirational books. She became Deaf, mute and blind at 18 months by an unusual sickness called “Brain fever”

She developed a limited way of communication and created a basic form of sign language. Her guide and mentor; Anne Sullivan taught her finger spelling and other ways of communication.

Keller was the first Deaf blind person to achieve a Bachelor of Arts degree. She became a great writer and communicated with millions of people across the globe. She can never be forgotten for the endless works she did around the world for people living with disability. She was not limited by her disabilities. Some children today have same problem with Keller. There is hope for them to be great.

Check out the story a young lady called Haben Girma. She is Deaf-Blind Lawyer.

ANDREW FOSTER (1925- 1987)

Father of the Deaf Education in Africa. He was an African-American Educator and Administrator for the Deaf born in Ensley, Alabama, Andrew Foster lost his hearing at 11 years as a result of Meningitis. He attended Alabama School for the black deaf in Talladega. He was accepted to Gallaudet with a full scholarship in 1951. He graduated with a degree in Education and also earned 2 Masters in degree from Eastern Michigan University 1955, and Christian mission in Seattle Pacific College Washington 1956.

Andrew Foster established the Christian Mission for deaf Africans in 1956. He established the 1st deaf school in West Africa (Osu, Ghana) Ghana Mission School for the deaf.

He established the Nigerian's First deaf school at Ibadan and also at Enugu and Kaduna. Foster established 32 schools for the deaf in 13 African nations. He is the father of the deaf education in Africa. He died on December 3rd 1987 on a plane crash in Rwanda, on his way to setting up more Deaf schools.

He shall be remembered for the great work in bringing Deaf school to Africa, particularly, Nigeria.

THOMAS EDISON (1847 -1931)

Thomas Edison was an American inventor and business man, who has been described as America's greatest Inventor.

He had hearing problem since he was a little boy and became completely deaf by his early teenage years. Edison saw advantage of being deaf, because it helped him concentrate on his work and he was so focused.

One of Edison's greatest achievements is the invention of the light bulb. He ensured it light a home for hours.

Secondly, he designed and developed the system of Electric Power to generate Electricity. This brought great advancement to the modern industrialized world. Imagine a world of no electricity!

His favorite invention was the production of the phonograph, which was used to create motion pictures. Now, we all enjoy the television movies, because of this one great deaf man.

Thomas Edison was not limited by deafness!!!

FORMER PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON.

Former President Bill Clinton was fitted with a completely-in-the-canal (CIC) hearing aids at age 51, while he was still the President of the United States in 1997. His hearing slowly worsened throughout his adult life and sometimes complains of not being able to hear in crowded rooms.

According to his doctor, Clinton's hearing loss is likely as a result of ageing and coupled with exposure to too much loud music during the bad-playing days of his youth.

We strongly advised our youths to be very careful when using the earphone to enjoy music.

HALLE BERRY

Halle Berry, a famous actress and the 1st black woman to win an Oscar Award for Best Actress, lost almost 80% of her hearing on her left ear resulting from a blow to the head during a domestic violence incident in a previous abusive relationship.

Berry now advocates for raising awareness about domestic violence.

SOME CAUSES OF DEAFNESS

The causes of hearing loss and deafness can be divided into:

- Congenital causes and
- Acquired causes

A. Congenital causes of Deafness: When a child is being delivered. Congenital causes may lead to hearing loss, being present a acquired immediately after childbirth.

Hearing loss can be caused by hereditary & non hereditary genetic factors also. It can also occur as a result of certain complications during pregnancy which include:

1. **Maternal rubella** (during pregnancy). The rubella virus can infect the fetus at any stage of pregnancy, but the defect are rarely noted when this occurs after 16th week of gestation. The most common abnormalities in the congenital rubella syndrome are: Hearing loss, cardiac malformations, eye defect and mental retardation. The good thing is that there is “Rubella Immunization” to prevent the “Congenital rubella syndrome”.

2. **Low birth weight:** Children with a low birth rate are at increased risk of suffering from sensorineural hearing loss. This is so because the ears may not be fully developed in the uterus; if the fetus grows slower than normal. The risk is greatest in children weighing less than 1,500 grams (3.31 lbs)
3. **Inappropriate use of drugs during pregnancy:** When a woman is pregnant, it is very important to visit the clinic and appropriate the right drugs can be recommended for the well being of both mother and child. Inappropriate use of anti-malaria, aminoglycosides, cytotoxic and diuretic drugs can lead to jaundice in the neonatal period, which may end up causing damage in the hearing nerve of a newborn infant.
4. **Birth Asphyxia:** Pre-term babies are more vulnerable than term babies, when it comes to hearing loss, as a result of lack of oxygen at the time of birth.
Asphyxia is a condition arising when the body is deprived of oxygen, causing unconsciousness organ failure or death. Birth asphyxia happens when a baby's brain and other organs do not get enough oxygen before, during or right after birth.

It Can Be Caused By:

- i. Too little oxygen in the mother's blood before or during child birth
- ii. Very difficult delivery
- iii. Placenta or umbilical cord separating too soon
- iv. Baby's air way not properly formed or blocked

2. Acquired causes of Deafness

Hearing loss can occur at any age as a result of acquired causes like some infectious disease such as Measles

- i. **Measles-** is a highly-contagious, viral disease that mostly affects children. It usually cause serious complications, including hearing loss and pneumonia, leading to death in young children
- ii. **Mumps-**(Popularly called Segede in Yoruba).It is a viral infection which spreads easily from persons to persons through infected saliva, coughs or sneezing in children. The mump virus damages the Cochlea, located in the inner ear which, houses the hair cells (Sterocilia) that translates sound vibration into nerve impulses for the brain to interpret as sounds. Once the hair cells are damaged, hearing becomes permanently affected because the hair cells do not regenerate. The best defense is immunization.

iii **Meningitis:** It is the most common and causes lasting consequences such as hearing loss. It is an infection in the lining and fluid around the brain and spinal column. It can occur at any age. Extremely powerful antibiotics are mostly given to cure patients and to save their lives also, However, the very antibiotics used to cure it, can cause hearing loss as well.

iv. **Ototoxicity:** Ear poisoning.

Oto = Ear

Tocity = Poisoning

This usually results from exposure to drugs or chemicals that damage the inner ear or the vestibule - Cochlear nerve. Ototoxicity can be temporary or permanent. Problems with a particular drug are usually only discovered after enough people have suffered the consequences. It is only after the physicians or other health care professionals can see a probable connection between the symptoms or problems and a drug, before such drug can be termed Ototoxic.

Many chemicals have ototoxic potentials even some over the counter drugs, prescription medicates and environmental chemicals some anticancer drugs also kill cells in the body including the ear too.

In ototoxicity the hair cells can be damaged to the point that they no longer stand erect, thus reaching the auditory signals sent to the brain.

- v. **Injury** to the head / ear, can also cause deafness
- vi. **Collection of fluid in the ear (Otitis media):** It is common among little children. It could be serious or chronic but consult your doctor for prompt treatment.
- vii. **Excessive Noise:** This is another cause of hearing loss. It could be occupational noise, such as that from machinery and explosion or recreational noise such as that from personal audio device concerts, night clubs, bars and sporting events.
- viii. **Ageing:** This is due to degeneration of the sensory cells as a result of old age. Many elderly people have experienced hearing loss as a result of old age. Many elderly people have experienced hearing loss as a result of old age. Not because it is hereditary
- ix. **Blocking of the ear canal by wax or foreign bodies** can also cause hearing loss. So this calls for the need to take good care of our ears.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS AROUND

Below are list of some special schools where a Deaf child can be enrolled.

1. Adedoyin Bayeku - Alase Deaf children foundation. (Brighter future school for the Deaf: A Nursery, Pry and Vocational school). Meiran, Lagos.
2. SAFREL Speech and Language Development Centre, Plot 12, Ilevbare Street, Odongunya, Ikorodu, Lagos.
3. MD Special School, Omole, Lagos.
4. CMDC - Christian Mission for the deaf centre, Mokola Dugbe. Onireke Ibadan. (Established by Dr. Andrew Foster, the father of Deaf Education in Africa).
5. Wesley school for the Deaf, 33, Ajao road, off Ogunlana Drive, surulere, Lagos.

ADVISE TO PARENTS/SIBLINGS OF DEAF CHILDREN

Below are a few words of advise:

1. Never over-pamper your deaf children treat them like you treat your other children. Do not let them indulge in bad habit just because of being deaf. Punish when necessary as you would do your hearing children
2. Learn the sign language. As a matter of fact, it should be made compulsory for every member of the family sign language must be embraced to help bring out the best in these special people you show them love, by learning their language .
3. Never stigmatise your deaf child/siblings It makes them feel they are less humans. It kills the potentials in them socially, they get withdrawn and not able to express themselves freely in the society.
4. Be ready to take advice from your deaf child's teacher and expert. Never see advice from them as insult.

Yes they are your children, you have right over them, but when experts who have undergone some research & studies about special students talk to you, please be willing to take to it.

5. Teach them to be grateful always, to appreciate every act of kindness. It is not their right to receive kindness so they should appreciate always, not because they are deaf.
6. Help your ward to discover there are of specialty. It could be a craft work like drawing, bead making, lace weaving, shoe & bag making etc. Encourage them to do something with their hands.
7. Parents of deaf children should stop shifting blames on each other, over the issue of the child's deafness.
God knows about the child even before he/she is conceived Jer. 29:11

8. Never attempt to terminate the life of your deaf child. Deafness is not the end of the world. Rather, empower them to be self-reliant and to face life with dignity and confidence
9. Never abandon/neglect your deaf child. Show them equal Love and affection as your other hearing children.
10. Parents should devote extra time and resources to their Deaf children through it might be more costly and more demanding. God reward every labour of love towards these special people. never get tired well doing remember, You are a steward of that special child. They are not factory faulted. They are special!!!

Together, we can educate the general public to stop stigmatizing them, and to embrace the sign language.

FINAL WORD

To my fellow hearing folks, I really appreciate your time taking reading through this book, which serves as a lens with which you have journeyed through “The Deaf world”. The world of total silence.

I believed strongly that you have being inspired! I want to implore you to please support my work of bridging the communication barrier between the Deaf and Hearing Communities.

I just cannot do it alone. I need your support.

I know if many people embrace sign language, many Deaf people with great talents will have opportunity to freely express themselves and be able to reach their full potential.

Being deaf is not a curse!

Let us stop the stigma!

I am proud to communicate with my fingers!

Let us make life easy for the Deaf by learning their language.

Contact: Funmi Ogunro
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08032223015



FRIENDS OF THE DEAF INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

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Phone: 08032223015

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Date:

PROPOSAL TO SET UP A SIGN LANGUAGE CENTRE

I write to propose a solution to the problem of communication gap among the deaf and the hearing communities.

I hereby write to seek for your support for the ongoing project of setting up a sign Language Center, for the purpose of teaching sign language. This will enable us bridge the communication gap among the hearing and deaf communities.

Sign Language is the language of the Deaf. It is very important that people understand the language particularly, parents, friends, neighbours and relations of the Deaf in our society. Many great talents of the Deaf are not being allowed to show forth, because of the communication gap.

There is a communication barrier in school, at work, in markets and many places of worship. Teachers are available to teach but we need a place to teach and your support will go a long way in achieving this project.

It will be our greatest joy to see many people become a friend of the deaf, by learning the sign language.

...With sign language we are equal.

Ogunro Funmi
CEO

THE BOOK

Journey into deaf world is a story of my late younger sister and some of my Deaf friends. It is a lens through which the hearing can see into the world and lives of Deaf people living amongst us. The unique features of this book include:

- ✍ What made the Deaf special
- ✍ Causes of deafness
- ✍ Famous great Deaf people
- ✍ Sign language vs English Language
- ✍ Advise to the parents/siblings of Deaf children.

Be inspired as you read....

ABOUT AUTHOR



Funmi Ogunro is the director of Phunmy Concepts. She set up an NGO called Friends of the Deaf International Foundation (FDF) by divine inspiration, loving memory of her beloved late younger sister, Olusola Abidemi Shenkoya. Her desire is to see everyone embrace sign language and become a friend of the Deaf. She is a motivational speaker and an advocate for Inclusion. She is happily married to Clement Idowu Ogunro and blessed with two boys, Harmony and Exploit.

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